

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 221116 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1366

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 4987

EXDIS

PARIS FOR KISSINGER

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CB

SUBJECT: ACTIVITIES OF SON SANN IN PHNOM PENH

REF: (A) PHNOM PENH 4476

(B) PHNOM PENH 4956

1. SON SANN INFORMS ME THAT HE BELIEVES HE HAS NOW ACCOMPLISHED ALL HE CAN HERE AND THEREFORE PLANS TO RETURN TO PARIS MAY 30. HE EXPRESSED MILD DISSAPPOINTMENT OVER THE MOST RECENT TURN OF EVENTS, MARSHAL LON NOL HAVING REJECTED AS QTE INEFFECTUAL UNQTE THE SANN PROPOSAL TO HOLD A RALLY AT WHICH HE WOULD HOPE TO OBTAIN A POPULAR MANDATE FOR TALKS WITH THE OTHER SIDE ON A CEASE- FIRE AND POLITICAL SETTLEMENT.

2. I PROBED SANN FOR MORE DETAIL THAN HE HAS PREVIOUSLY SUPPLIED ON THE FORMULA HE HAS IN MIND. HE EXPLAINED THAT A MANDATE FROM THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL ALONE WOULD BE WORTH VERY LITTLE SINCE THE OTHER SIDE IS ADAMANT IT WILL
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NEVER DEAL WITH LON NOL OR SIRIK MATAK (HE DESCRIBED THE OPPOSITION OF THE OTHER SIDE TO CHENG HENG AND IN TAM AS LESS CATEGORIC). THEREFORE, WHILE HE WOULD OBVIOUSLY NEED THE ACQUIESCENCE OF THE COUNCIL HE ALSO REQUIRED A MANDATE FROM THE PEOPLE TO SEEK PEACE. AT THE RALLY HE WOULD ASK THE PEOPLE WHETHER THEY PREFER CONTINUE THE WAR OR TO EMPOWER HIM TO SEEK PEACE; GIVEN THE UNPOPULARITY OF THE WAR, HE EXPECTED TO RECEIVE A MANDATE TO SEEK PEACE AND ARMED WITH IT TO ENGAGE IN TALKS WITH THE OTHER SIDE. SANN SAID HE ATTRIBUTES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE PRESENCE AND SUPPORT OF THE BUDDHIST HIERARCHY AT THE RALLY.

3. I ASKED HIM WITH WHOM HE WOULD EXPECT TO MAKE CONTACT ON THE OTHER SIDE, WHICH IS SUPERFICIALLY UNITED BUT STILL DIVIDED IN PURPOSE AND RENT WITH MUTUAL SUSPICIONS. HE REPLIED THAT THE OTHER SIDE ITSELF WOULD HAVE TO SORT OUT ITS REPRESENTATION BUT THAT AS A KHMER NATIONALIST HE WOULD HAVE GREATER SUCCESS IN DEALING WITH THE NATIONALIST LEFTISTS (KHMER ROUGE) AND THE NON- COMMUNIST SIHANOUKISTS THAN WITH THE HANOI- DOMINATED COMMUNISTS (AS A NATIONALIST AND NON- COMMUNIST, SANN SHARES THE ALMOST UNIVERSAL MISTRUST HERE OF THE DRV).

4. I TOLD SANN THAT WHILE THIS FORMULA HAD THE ADVANTAGE OF KEEPING THE IRRECONCILABLES (LON NOL AND SIHANOUK) AT ARM' S LENGTH AND PERMITTING NEGOTIATIONS TO GET UNDER WAY WITHOUT DIRECT GKR OR GRUNK PARTICIPATION, THE TALKS ULTIMATELY WOULD HAVE TO INVOLVE BOTH THOSE ENTITIES. I ASKED HIM, IN VIEW OF HIS EARLIER INSISTENCE THAT LON NOL MUST EVENTUALLY GO (REFTEL A, PARA 3 B), WHAT HE SAW AHPPENING TO SIHANOUK. SANN COMMENTED THAT SIHANOUK WOULD PROBABLY INSIST ON RETURNING TO PHNOM PENH BRIEFLY TO QTE RESTORE HIS FACE UNQTE, BUT WITH NEITHER THE GKR NOR THE INSURGENTS REALLY WANTING HIS RETURN TO POWER HE COULD BE CONSIDERED TO BE EN PASSAGE TO RETIREMENT AT HIS VILLA NEAR NICE. ONE WOUL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL, HE ADDED, TO ARRANGE THAT SIHANOUK' S ENTOURAGE LEFT WITH HIM.

5. I POINTED OUT THAT WHILE WE AGREE THE SOONER A
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CEASE- FIRE THE BETTER A QUESTION OF THE TIMING OF A NEGOTIATING INITIATIVE IS ALSO IMPORTANT. WITH IN TAM NOW TAKING OVER AND THE INSURGENCY OFFENSIVE AT LEAST TEMPORARILY BLUNTED, THE GKR COULD PERHAPS IN THE NEXT WEEKS GAIN FURTHER POPULAR SUPPORT AND IMPROVE SOMEWHAT ITS MILITARY POSITION. THIS ACCOMPLISHED, IT WOULD BE IN A STRONGER POSITION TO TAKE AN INITIATIVE OF THE SORT

SANN HAS FORMULATED. SANN AGREED AND SAID THAT FOLLOW-
ING HIS MEDICAL QTE CURE UNQTE IN THE PYRENEES IN
JUNE HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO RETURN TO PHNOM PENH IF
THE SITUATION IS PROPITIOUS.

6. WE AGREED TO MEET AGAIN ON MAY 29, AT WHICH TIME I
SAID I HOPED TO HAVE A CLEARER PICTURE OF THE ROAD
AHEAD FOLLOWING THE KISSINGER- LE DUC THO CONVERSATION.
SWANK

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